

Message Text

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TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

USLO PEKING PRIORITY

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, MC, HK, US

SUBJECT: MACAU TRANSIT CENTER

REF: (A) GENEVA 6728; (B) HONG KONG 1707; (C) 77 HONG KONG
15185; (D) 77 HONG KONG 14154

1. ON BASIS EVIDENCE COOPERATIVE LOCAL ATTITUDES (REFTELS)
DEPARTMENT SEES A POTENTIAL USE OF MACAU FOR A HOLDING
CENTER FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES APPROVED UNDER THE UNITED
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STATES PROGRAM BUT AWAITING SPONSOR ASSURANCES. POSTS
FACING MAJOR REFUGEE PROBLEMS HAVE REPEATEDLY RECOMMENDED
THE REOPENING OF SUCH A CENTER IN THE UNITED STATES. COSTS
AND OTHER FACTORS MAKE THIS UNDESIRABLE IF AT ALL AVOIDABLE.
NEVERTHELESS, THE BUILD UP OF REFUGEE POPULATIONS IN
MALAYSIA AND THAILAND HAS BECOME A FACTOR THREATENING THE
CONTINUING ACCEPTANCE OF REFUGEES BY THESE COUNTRIES. THE

WAIT FOR SPONSOR ASSURANCES ADDS ABOUT TWO MONTHS TO THE AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME FOR THESE REFUGEES. IF REFUGEES COULD BE MOVED FROM OTHER FIRST ASYLUM AREAS IN SEA, ESPECIALLY MALAYSIA AND THAILAND, TO MACAU AFTER THE INS CLEARANCE HAS BEEN OBTAINED, A SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE COULD BE RELIEVED IN THESE CRITICAL AREAS. (FYI: WE DO NOT FORESEE THAT ANY POTENTIAL SINGAPORE PROGRAM WOULD REMOVE THIS REQUIREMENT).

2. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD CALL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A HOLDING CENTER IN MACAU PROBABLY UNDER UNITED STATES AUSPICES THROUGH A CONTRACT WITH A VOLUNTARY AGENCY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SUCH A FACILITY. WHILE AN ARRANGEMENT MIGHT BE WORKED OUT UNDER UNHCR AUSPICES, THIS SEEMS MUCH LESS LIKELY AND IF DONE AT ALL, WOULD PROBABLY TAKE SUBSTANTIALLY LONGER TO ACCOMPLISH. INITIALLY HOUSING REQUIREMENTS MIGHT BE MET BY A TENT CAMP (ESPECIALLY IN A CRISIS SITUATION) IF CONGEN BELIEVES THIS WOULD BE FEASIBLE. ALTERNATIVELY, LOCAL CONSTRUCTION TEMPORARY SHELTER MIGHT BE MORE DESIRABLE. SUCH A CAMP MIGHT HOUSE UP TO 5,000 REFUGEES IN TRANSIT TO THE UNITED STATES. ULTIMATELY, MORE PERMANENT SHELTER MIGHT BE NEEDED SINCE THE PROGRAM SEEMS LIKELY TO CONTINUE FOR SOME YEARS. THE BASIS OF THE PROGRAM WOULD BE THAT ANY REFUGEES BROUGHT TO MACAU WOULD BE GUARANTEED ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES; ALL EXPENSES WOULD BE PAID BY THE UNITED STATES; THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AVERAGE STAY OF THESE REFUGEES AT THIS FACILITY WOULD BE ABOUT TWO MONTHS.

3. REQUEST CONGEN TENTATIVE VIEWS SOONEST AS TO FEASIBILITY OF SUCH A PROPOSAL. INCLUDING, IF POSSIBLE, COST ESTIMATES, TOTAL NUMBER OF REFUGEES THAT MIGHT BE ACCOMMODATED AND VIEWS AS TO VOLAGS WITH LOCAL STRENGTH TO UNDERTAKE MANAGEMENT OF SUCH A PROJECT. VANCE

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